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AN AMERICAN PAPER FOR THE AMERICAN PEOPLE.

THERE MUST BE A NATIONAL CANAL.

Now that Congress is in session, with a prospect that the national desire for the construction of the Nicaragua Canal may be gratified, we have renewed announcements that the De Lesseps ditch at Panama is about to be completed by American capitalists. The Panama Canal Company, we are informed, has been re-organized on an American basis and the stockholders in the French company will exchange their shares for stock in the American corporation. This, it is naively explained, will place the Panama route "on the same basis as the Nicaragua Canal before the United States Government." The American backers of the enterprise are such capitalists as August Belmont, Levi P. Morton, C. R. Flint, J. & W. Seligman, Kuhn, Loeb & Co., Warner Van Norden, J. Edward Simmons, Edmund C. Converse, George R. Sheldon, V. H. Brown, Captain J. R. De La Mar and J. P. Morgan & Co.

The plate glass windows in Mr. Morgan's office are not more transparent than the purpose of this proceeding. Railroad transportation across the Continent is monopolized by certain men. The same men control steamer transportation in connection with the Panama Railroad. Only one thing threatens their monopoly—the possibility that an independent transportation route, beyond the reach of combination, may be opened by the Government across the Central American Isthmus. "Some day," these astute financiers say to themselves, "there will be men in power honest enough to keep their promises to the public. Let us forestall the danger by offering to build a private canal, and, if necessary, by actually building it. Then we can enlarge upon the useless extravagance of building two canals, and the traffic will still remain under our exclusive control."

What do the people answer? This:

Canals are all right. Build as many as you please. Pierce the Cordillera if you will at every pass, from Tehuantepec to the Atrato. But whatever you do in that way we are going to have our own canal, built by our Government and operated for our benefit.

The American people do not want a canal for the mere pleasure of seeing it on the map. They want it for definite benefits. A canal owned by the men who control the transcontinental railroad system would be equivalent merely to another overland railroad. It would be taken immediately into the Transcontinental Association and its rates would be fixed with a view to the continuance of the profits of the existing lines on their old scale. The rule of the charges would be "all the traffic could bear."

Even competition, if such a thing were possible, would give no real relief. It would mean merely shading under the railroad rate to an extent sufficient to divert traffic, but not sufficient to cause any material lightening of the burdens of shippers. A cut of 5 per cent would answer all the purposes of competition, but what the people need is a cut of at least 50 per cent.

The proper course for our Government is plain.

Build the Nicaragua Canal.

If there must be tolls, make them as low as will cover expenses, but better yet, charge nothing, make the canal as free as an arm of the sea and let the nation foot the bill, as the State of New York does in the case of the Erie Canal.

With a Government waterway as a regulator of rates there will be no further occasion for uneasiness about private canals. They may come or not, as their projectors like. But let it be clearly understood that the American people will never consent to have isthmian transit monopolized by such a combination of capitalists as controls railroad transportation in the United States. Let no Congressman imagine that he can deceive his constituents on that issue. Let no President think that he can pass off a J. Pierpont Morgan canal for a national canal.

The American people want an isthmian waterway for two purposes—national defence and commercial advantage. Neither of these ends can be attained by a canal owned by a syndicate or by anything but one owned, controlled and operated by the National Government. The people have waited for a canal of their own for fifty years, and they will have it now or give some of their servants a very uncomfortable season explaining why not.

Fight the Astoria Grant.

Corporation Counsel Whalen does not propose to accept the signature of Governor Roosevelt to the Astoria land grant as final. He proposes to bring suit to annul the action of the State Land Board.

In signing the Astoria grab Governor Roosevelt bases his action upon "precedents." He talks of "custom" in the past. It was the custom of this city to give away franchises for street railroads and for all manner of conduits. Of course, the city had the power to do this and keep within the limits of the law.

If Roosevelt had been in power in 1885, would he have excused the Jake Sharp steal? If he held the municipal reins now, and another street railway steal were to develop among Republican bosses, would he excuse it on the grounds of "precedent" and "custom?"

If the law gives to a few State officials the power to alienate city property the law should be altered. Governor Roosevelt has done what he can to further the loot of such property, but we should spare no effort to keep what belongs to us.

While no private party or corporation could have utilized the land under water around Berrian's Island it would have become very valuable to the city in future years.

As matters now stand, when New York shall acquire its own gas plant we shall have to condemn and purchase at a vastly increased figure the very land which the State Land Board and Governor Roosevelt have given away.

English and American Army Equipment.

When the soldiers of a country are fighting abroad the home-staying population is always a fault finding one. The English people are now engaged in much the same kind of recrimination against their army equipment and fighting facilities that marked the beginning of our war with Spain.

The English transport service is derided, the artillery is bitterly scored and many officials are being called to account.

In spite of our unpreparedness in the war with Spain, we do not suffer by comparison with England in the matter of sea transportation and artillery effectiveness. At the beginning of the war we had not a single transport ship. Yet more American soldiers were sent to Porto Rico, Cuba and Manila than England has sent to Africa.

In addition to providing a huge transport fleet off-hand we had to enlist and equip the men, establish them in camps and hold them in readiness for transportation.

All this was done by capable and experienced army officers, to whom much praise is due. Of our commissary nothing in praise can be said. It was under the special wing of Alger, who practically had nothing else to do.

He did nothing in the matter of transportation, enlistment or equipment but approve the suggestions of the able and practical men under him. He was at home in the commissary business on account of its mercantile and commercial side. He and Eagan were responsible for the decayed and poisonous meats furnished our soldiers.

With this exception we compare favorably with England. The English soldiers in South Africa may well be thankful that they are not handicapped by an

SCHWEIGHOFER IS A MARVEL BOTH IN METHOD AND MOBILITY.

Alan Dale Admires the Uncanny Art of the German Comedian.

By Alan Dale.

DON'T worry about your German. It doesn't matter in the least. Go to the Irving Place Theatre and see a wonderful face—a loose, putty-like, mobile countenance that responds to its owner's slightest behests. Go and watch a face that can tell you everything you want to know by its mere expression—a face that has all sorts of mouth, every kind of eye, every description of nose—in season and out of it—and all the variations of lip. This peculiar face that Felix Schweighofer calls his own he can squeeze into every imaginable shape, just as those rubber face vendors in lower Broadway distort the countenance counterfeits that are intended to amuse children. Don't worry about your German. More words are not necessary to this actor. They are even superfluous. The blue-chinned declamation might recite to you for an hour and a half without telling you what this rubber-faced Schweighofer can impart to you without uttering a word.

I saw him in "Ein Blitzmalheur," a worthless "musical comedy" by Costa and Milloker, and although the English language is good enough for me at all times, and I go but superficially into others, the evening flew, and I realized that I was watching an actor who knew it all, and whose reputation in Germany and Austria appears to be built upon the very solidest sort of rock. Schweighofer is anything but a poseur. He has been through the mill, and has worked his way up from the lowest ranks. He must be pretty close upon sixty (with his face he could look nineteen or a hundred with equal success), but he is an ardent worker, to whom every detail is worth while. Such a jolly old boy! Here is an indefatigable person, whom you simply couldn't imagine traveling in state in a private car, or breaking down from "nervous exhaustion" because a steam pipe said "Boo!" Nor, for that matter, is Herr Schweighofer the personification of health, good humor, conscientious endeavor and a method that must be contagious to his associates.

In the first act of "Ein Blitzmalheur" you saw him without character make-up—a flabby, jovial, rollicking sort of a dog—never quiet, at the wings rather than in the centre of the stage, chattering, laughing, singing (or doing the best he could in that direction) and infusing jollity into a rather joyless and dismal play. In the next act he was a senile French abbe, almost crumbling away with age, you began to marvel. This might be likened to Irving's antiquity in "Waterloo." It was just as clever, and a trifle more marvellous, because Schweighofer got even further away from himself than Irving does as Corporal Gregory Brewster.



FELIX SCHWEIGHOFER.

He was simply the funniest old abbe you could possibly see, and in every gesture, every word, the idea of age was presented graphically. It was nearly impossible to realize that this was the loose-faced, modern-looking actor whom you labeled Schweighofer in the first act. Any actor can "make-up" old. There is nothing whatsoever in it, although we sometimes rave about the art of pencil and grease paint. As the abbe, Schweighofer was absolutely and utterly decrepit. There were wrinkles not only in his face, but in his manner. His actions were as shriveled as his back. There was nothing about him that betrayed any resemblance to his natural self.

Then you saw him as a Spanish ballet master, in plush knickerbockers and with the scruffy suavity that belongs to the brand. Another change of face and manner; another jugglery with years; another physical and mental contortion. After watching him you come to the conclusion that acting is not an over-rated institution—an idea that occasionally seizes you when you watch the drawing-room exponent lolling all over the stage and apparently caring little whether you either hear or understand him.

This German actor is decidedly worth seeing. I know it is the correct thing to perpetually laud the German playhouse to the betterment of the non-German resort, but I don't indulge in these little tactics. I am aware that it is good policy to preach about the thoroughness of production in Irving place, and teach lessons to people who don't want to learn them. But that is for me to do very seldom. I rarely go to Irving place and won't be such a hypocrite as to pretend that I should like to go oftener. I have seen some excellent work done by Mr. Corbied's people, and Corbied himself is a man whom it is impossible not to admire. But this Schweighofer I certainly did appreciate.

He Has a Wonderfully Elastic Face and Is Always Irresistibly Funny.

Anybody who loves good acting and who wants to see the art in its perfection will be interested in this visitor, who, as a matter of fact, cares little whether we like him or whether we don't.

In "Ein Blitzmalheur" Schweighofer has very few accessories to rely upon. There is no call for much scenery or for very many people. It is all very tepid and prosaic and old-fashioned and lacking in glamour. Anna Leonardi sings in a doleful way that almost gives one the blues, and the actors, with the sole exception of Georg Essel, who gave us a capital idea of that rather worn-out character, the well-dressed almscook, blundered nothing at all, and merely "supported" Herr Schweighofer in a pun-staking sort of way.

I should like to see Schweighofer as Gaspard in "Les Cloches de Corneville," a part which it appears he has often played, but I am afraid that this desire will not be gratified, as "Les Cloches de Corneville" needs a few other things, and one Gaspard wouldn't make it a success by any means. There is nobody exactly like Schweighofer on the English speaking stage. We have some exponents of character parts like Irving and like Mansfield—who made his Cyrano a joyless, sardonic sort of creature. That ambitious young person, Louis Mann, in "The Girl in the Barracks," seemed by his make-up and his acting as though he could one of these days take a leaf from Schweighofer's book. That day may be some distance away, but that doesn't matter very much.

Few comedians when they reach the ripe age of sixty seem to think that their avocation is worth very much. Their thoughts turn to emotionalism. They long to make you weep, while you are simply pining for a good, hearty, health-giving, irresistible laugh. A comedian who is successful at forty is generally ten years later begging you to accept him in a ridiculous tissue of "self-sacrificing" situations, or asking you to weep at his ruin, as the curtain falls. "The sympathy of the audience" is what he craves. He is no longer thankful for your laughter. The heaven-sent mirth which he was fortunate to produce he looks upon as the tributes of the clown—and a clown in his eyes touches the lowest rung of degradation. A man of sixty who can win your laughing approval is of more use in this world than one who can thrill you and make you weep. Tears are nice and soothing in their way, but they will come to us unsought, and we needn't wander from our own bedside to find them. In fact, Schweighofer is a funny person, who appeals to you in the universal language, and for whose comprehension you needn't worry about "der, die, das" or "gewesen, geworden sein."

MRS. JOHN DREXEL'S DOUBLE COTILLON. HER SECRETARY WILL LEAD.

MRS. "JOHN," as Mrs. Drexel is called by her intimates and the Philadelphia people, has decided to have a double cotillon on the 8th. There are to be many novelties introduced, but perhaps, for the moment, the most startling one is her asking her secretary to lead the dance.

So far, Mrs. Drexel's secretary has been useful in many ways. He writes her letters, he sends out her invitations, revises her dancing list and her visiting list, arranges her dinners, and makes himself generally agreeable. Mrs. Drexel was the first woman to introduce the custom of taking a young man from the Four Hundred, or Elect, or whatever you might call it, and having him serve in that capacity. Miss Maria de Baril seemed to usurp any position of that kind previously. She has occupied the post as confidential amanuensis to the Vanderbilts and Miss De Forest.

Willie Hyde Neilson is the name of Mrs. Drexel's secretary. He is a first cousin of Mrs. Fred Neilson and also of Jimmie Hyde Beckman. It was through him that Mrs. Drexel gained her first Newport recognition. If there are any other young knickerbockers unemployed they should step up. There is a story that the Goulds are looking around for a social mentor of this kind, and the men at the Knickerbocker Club are in an absolute hurry. This is worth more than watching the ticker and playing poker.

Can it be? What a story of strife among such good little boys. I hear that Harry Lehr and Stevens Ullman actually have had a quarrel, and that it nearly came to blows. It was in the Waldorf, and the Ellisha Dyers, who have taken sides with Ullman, are all real mad, and Mrs. Dyer and Mrs. Stuyvesant Fish have had a little falling out over the subject. Harry Lehr and Stevens Ullman often meet in the Waldorf cafe.

Now, Ullman is a very good fellow, a little too much given to shaking hands effectively with people and trying to boom himself in society. He has always been accused of having great social ambitions, and perhaps he has gained that reputation because he has always been seen in the company of social "boomers." He was taken in hand by the Burnetts, who have helped many a good soul under its shawl, and never was it heard louder and more virulent than by Jesus Christ during his trial and crucifixion. DANIEL T. AMES.

Astor House, New York, Dec. 28.

The Journal has nothing but detestation for blasphemy. It believes that every man's religion is sacred, and that to ridicule his faith is as inexcusable as to ridicule his wife or mother. Nevertheless it does not believe that any transgressions of good taste and good feeling in this matter have anything to do with the value of an expert's testimony on a question of handwriting, or pathology, or poison analysis. The attempt of a lawyer to drag such irrelevant matters before a jury for the benefit of a man accused of murder was quite as bad as the blasphemy itself, and deserved the chastisement it received from Recorder Goff.

The Perfect Remedy.

To the Editor of the New York Journal:

Peace be to you! Allow me, at this Christmas tide, to call discouraged people's attention through the columns of your newspaper to the one perfect remedy for all human woes. Sad faces through our streets. Breaking hearts are everywhere. Suicides multiply. Surely this need not be so.

It can be changed instantly and forever for every man, woman and child who will only believe God our Saviour, who cannot lie, and who says: "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."—Matthews, xi, 28.

This is an instantaneous and perfect remedy for all the ills that flesh is heir to, and is free for everybody. Many have proved it. All can. In love of Christ, WM. F. DAVIS.

New York, Dec. 27.

Quite Dissimilar.

They are going to have a roof garden on a Brooklyn church.

"That has nothing to do with the psalmist's idea of praying on a housetop, has it?"—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Previously Damaged.

"Ann, you have broken the nose of this beautiful Venus."

"Yes—but you needn't think I'm going to pay for her; her arm was clipped off when I came."—Detroit Free Press.



Mrs. Stuyvesant Fish.

Commonwealth avenue. As I have indicated, the Abbotts have bought the Coolidge house, and are preparing a diversity of entertainments to indicate that it is really their possession. As I have heard, the penetrators of Hub humariates are waiting with bated breaths to find out the nature of these entertainments, and I fancy much of their success will be incumbent upon their quality and exclusiveness.

Notes of Society.

Mrs. Theodore Havemeyer, who was to have sailed for Europe last week, has changed her plans and will probably spend the winter in this country.

Miss Augusta McKim Davies, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Gilbert Davies, of No. 22 East Forty-fifth street, will be married on April 25 to Mr. Louis Ogden. The wedding will take place in St. Bartholomew's Church.

The Knickerbocker Bowling Club will hold its first meeting this season on Wednesday, March 7, at the Tennis Building, No. 212 West Forty-first street. The officers of the club are: President, Mr. J. Hooker Hamersley; vice-president, Mr. Matthew A. Wilks; secretary, Mr. Cortlandt S. Van Rensselaer, and treasurer, Mr. Walter Hunter. The patronesses are Mrs. Clement C. Moore, Mrs. Philip (the elder) Mrs. Philip J. Sands, Mrs. Henry J. Barber, Mrs. Hyam K. Stevens, Mrs. Frederick J. Sheldon, Mrs. Frederick J. De Peyster, Mrs. George L. Kingstand and Mrs. Prescott Hall Butler.

A New Year's Eve party will attract many of the fashionable set to Castle Point, Hoboken, the home of the Stevens family.

The third Junior Cotillon at Delmonico's will be of to-morrow's social events.

Mrs. Samuel de la Plaine S. Ellis, Jr., No. 19

East Fifty-fifth street, has sent out cards for three afternoon receptions on Fridays, January 12, 19 and 23.

Mrs. Henry Sidenberg, Miss Sidenberg and Miss Madeleine Sidenberg, No. 14 West Fifty-first street, issued invitations for three at homes on Saturdays, January 13, 20 and 27, from 4 until 7 o'clock.

Mrs. Kate M. Simon and Miss Simon, No. 52 East Fifty-fifth street, will receive on Tuesdays in January, from 4 until 7 o'clock.

The Thursday Evening Club will be entertained next Thursday by Mrs. Henry Draper, No. 271 Madison avenue.

The Sunday "diners de luxe" at Sherry's this year are really all that their name implies, especially since the arrival of the new string orchestra from the Hotel Savoy, London. Every member of the orchestra is an artist.

The second meeting this season of Mrs. Church's dancing class will be held at Sherry's to-night.

The dancing class arranged by Mrs. Dallas Bache Pratt will meet at Sherry's this evening.

Mrs. O'Connor's dancing class will hold its second meeting at Delmonico's this evening.

Many well-known New Yorkers attended the dance given by Mrs. Potter Palmer in Chicago last evening. It was a floral cotillon for her sons—Potter Palmer, Jr., and Honore Palmer—and was one of the most elaborate entertainments of the holiday season. One hundred and seventy-five of the young set attended it. Some of the women were gowns representing flowers or garlanded with blossoms. Many appeared with powdered hair. Flowers were used as favors in the cotillon.

Mrs. J. Henry Alexandre, of No. 10 West Thirty-second street, gave a Christmas dance last evening, in honor of her son, Mr. J. Henry Alexandre, Jr., who led the cotillon with his cousin, Miss Laurence.